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Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara

July 20, 1965

Chester L. Cooper

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By ig, NARS, Date 6-5-79

Although I have had but a brief opportunity to read the draft report and do not have it available as I write, a few observations may be of interest.

The contemplated U.S. force build-up will, hopefully stop the erosion of security, at some later point push the VC back into the jungle, and, sooner or later, make them more amenable to a political settlement. But there are three worrisome problems here -

A. Will the President be able to settle for something less than a clear-cut military victory (or at least something that can be creditably passed off as one) after committing forces of the contemplated scale? Would a much larger force which provided a greater chance for a "military victory" be easier for him to live with than the contemplated force which might break the back of the main force, but not necessarily cut deeply into the VC capability for substantial guerrilla activity?

B. Should the report address the question of dealing with the guerrilla problem through a major political-economic pay war effort? I have a queasy feeling that, thus far, the kind and level of planning that has gone into the non-military sphere is vastly inadequate and would suggest that this problem be attacked as soon as possible with the kind of priority and drive that has been given to military planning.

C. Should the report explicitly state that the forces contemplated may well turn out to be significantly less than what may have to be committed not only in Viet-Nam but elsewhere, as we raise the ante here?

D. After the commitment of even the contemplated level of U.S. forces, will we be able to settle for a political settlement involving anything less than the VC's turning in their suits altogether.

On a different aspect of the problem, the matter of the deployment of U.S. forces, I am attaching a "devil's advocate" paper which argues the case for U.S. forces in the highlands.

Your paper points up the importance of Chieu Hoi and we might want to develop a separate set of recommendations later this week. Unger and I have had some useful talks with the Chieu Hoi survey team and with representatives of Rand and I spent this morning getting a first hand look at the Chieu Hoi situation in Long An. I also have a few suggestions on U.S. Forces-Vietnamese relations which I will submit in a separate paper.

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